

I am I

THE Ultimate Answer to THE Existential Reality Question

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Divine revelation gems from Chandogya Upanishad: Chapter 6 (Dialogue between Uddalaka and Svetaketu)

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The Upanishads (also called Vedanta) are toward the end of the Vedas, the holy scripture of the Hindus. I must also say here that I am a Hindu. It is my fervent belief that these Upanishads contain wonderful gems of divine revelation about the mysteries of the universe and about divine power (formless God). Given below are some such wonderful gems of divine revelation from Chandogya Upanishad, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandogya_Upanishad.

I have included extracts of Chandogya Upanishad from Prof. Max Muller's Sacred Books of East, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_Books_of_the_East, (spelt as Khândogya Upanishad in it) as that is out of copyright. It can be viewed from the index page here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01/index.htm>. I have used the term [MM, SBE] below to refer to Prof. Max Muller's above mentioned book.

Readers who would like to see the Sanskrit verses in Devanagari (Sanskrit) script of Chandogya upanishad can do so here: <http://www.astrojyoti.com/pdfs/DevanagariFiles/ChandogyaUpanishat.pdf>. Note that Chapter 6 starts from pdf file page 50 but which has page number printed as 130 as the pdf file seems to be an extract from a larger file. I have also uploaded this pdf file on my blog here: <https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/chandogyaupanishat-sanskrit.pdf> as the file has no copyright.

The shlokas (verses) below have the original Sanskrit verses in Roman (English) script followed by Max Muller, SBE English translation of it.

My comments on the shlokas (verses) below have been strongly influenced by a near-contemporary spiritual master's commentary on Chandogya Upanishad. As I want to emphasize spiritual teachings/paths/philosophy/knowledge which may be viewed as universal though I have used the Hindu way of expressing them, I have chosen not to mention the name of this near-contemporary spiritual master.

Chapter 6, Part 1

Verse 3: *Yenaashrutam shrutam bhavati amatham matham, avijnaatham vijnaatham iti katham nu bhagavah sa aadesho bhavathithi.*

[MM, SBE]: ('His father said to him: 'Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern,) have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?')

Verse 4: *Yathaa somya ekena mrt-pindena sarvam mrmayam vijnaatham syaath vaachaarambhanam vikaaro naamadheyam mrttikethi eva sathyam.*

[MM, SBE]: ('What is that instruction, Sir?' he asked. The father replied:) 'My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay'

Verse 5: *Yathaa somya ekena lohamaninaa sarvam lohamayam vijnaatham syaath vaachaarambhanam vikaro namadheyam lohamithi eva sathyam.*

[MM, SBE]: And as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold

Ravi: My understanding of the above verses is that there is an underlying core being-ness (or existence-ness or is-ness) which is the vital aspect of all existence. It is this vital being-ness which is manifested in different ways and appears as the universe to us. This being-ness cannot be easily known by gross intelligence. This being-ness can be known or realized by subtle intelligence.

Chapter 6, Part 2

Verse 1: *Sath eva somya idam agra aaseed ekam evaadvithiyam, tadd haika aahuh, asad evedam agra aaseed ekam evaadvithiyam, tasmaad asathah saj jaayatha.*

[MM, SBE]: 'In the beginning,' my dear, 'there was that only which is (तò ॐ), one only, without a second. Others say, in the beginning there was that only which is not (तò न ॐ), one only, without a second; and from that which is not, that which is was born.

Verse 2: *Kuthas tu khalu somya evam syaath ithi hovaacha katham asathah saj jaayethethi, sath thu eva somya idam agra aaseed ekam evaadvithiyam.*

[MM, SBE]: 'But how could it be thus, my dear?' the father continued. 'How could that which is, be born of that which is not? No, my dear, only that which is, was in the beginning, one only, without a second.'

Verse 3: *Tad aikshatha bahu syaam prajaayeyethi, thath thejo srjatha: thath thejo aikshatha bahu syaam prajaayeyethi, thad aposrjata, thasmaad yatra kva cha shochathi svedate vaa purushah thejasa eva tad adhy apo jaayante.*

[MM, SBE]: It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. And therefore whenever anybody anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone.

Ravi: It is the being-ness (or existence-ness or is-ness) that was there even before creation of the universe. And it was one only, without a second. There was no void prior to creation. Only this being-ness was there. Creation of the universe happened as this one and only one being-ness thought or willed that it become many! That resulted in the great variety of creation but all of which has this being-ness as its vital core. *[I prefer not to comment on the fire and water part of the verse 3 above except for saying that I think it may be related to the understanding of ancient sages about material composition of the universe with fire and water being considered as key elements. I don't think these views of ancient sages about material composition of the universe are important from the perspective of understanding the key spiritual revelation message of the above verses.]*

In my earlier readings of this sixth chapter of Chandogya Upanishad, I had understood 'the knowledge which if known, all things can be known' to imply that a 'self-realized' person knows everything even about the material universe. So I thought that a self-realized person would, besides knowing his ultimate reality, also know about all physical sciences and about past, present and future of everybody including himself. But now my understanding is that Uddalaka tells Svetaketu that if you know the source ("being-ness" or "existence-ness" or "is-ness") then you know the cause of the material universe and knowing the cause/source is the only important thing worth knowing. Perhaps it is like how when we are caught up in a 'sleep' nightmare dream we get very worried while in the dream. But the moment we 'wake up' from the 'sleep dream' we realize that it was 'just a dream' and dismiss the 'sleep dream' experience. We then focus on the 'waking dream' experience as the only important thing worth worrying about.

So my understanding of 'self-realization' now is that the 'self-realized' person realizes that his reality is the changeless "being-ness" or "existence-ness" or "is-ness" which projects his changing personality, mind and body as well as this entire (changing) material universe drama. He then stays aware of that changeless "being-ness" reality (sometimes also referred to as changeless "awareness" or "consciousness") and lives out his/her life as a 'waking dream'. He is not really bothered about material knowledge like, say, the laws of physics as they deal with the changing 'waking dream' world and not the changeless reality ("being-ness"). Of course as he lives in the material world he does need to have some level of material knowledge so that he (his mind & body) can survive and, in some cases, thrive. [Nisargadatta ran a 'Tambaku/Bidi']

(Tobacco/cigarette) shop in Mumbai and so must have been quite knowledgeable about tobacco besides being 'self-realized' :-)]. The self-realized perhaps look upon the world as the great Leela of the Lord and some of them, at least, may be enjoying this Great Play, this phenomenal and utterly wonderful creation that the Maya Shakti of the Lord has projected.

Further, IMHO, Ramana and Nisargadatta did not seem to have any knowledge about their own future let alone future of others. So once again, most 'self-realized' persons may just be watching their own mind, body and 'material life' go through various ups and downs but not getting affected by it as they are aware of and established in their experience of the ultimate reality of their existence as the changeless "being-ness" (also referred to as unchanging consciousness).

Of course, some great siddhas (miraculous spiritual adepts) do have fantastic powers where they can do amazing things in the material world. And I believe that Avatars can do virtually anything and know virtually everything as they are Almighty God in human form specially endowed with Avatar supernatural powers. Devotees of the Lord can also, through their intense Bhakti, get the Lord to do amazing things/miracles. But many 'Jnana' marg (wisdom path) 'self-realized' persons like Ramana or Nisargadatta did not seem to possess or be even remotely interested in possessing 'siddhis' (miraculous powers).

This being-ness cannot be easily known by gross intelligence. This being-ness can be known or realized by subtle intelligence. I think this distinction between gross intelligence and subtle intelligence is crucial. This chapter (VI) of the Upanishad starts with Uddalaka pricking the puffed up ego of Svetaketu who thinks that by learning the Veda for many years (12 years perhaps) he has become very learned. This 'gross intelligence' learning pride balloon is burst when Uddalaka asks about the knowledge by which what is unknown gets known (6.1.3). Then Svetaketu becomes ready to receive the 'subtle intelligence' related knowledge (self-realization related knowledge) which Uddalaka imparts.

In the Jnana marg, unraveling the mind and eventually making it disappear, and thereby experiencing the "changeless being-ness" seems to need extremely subtle analysis of 'experiential'/'existential' reality. That is very tricky business as it usually would unravel one's material life as well :-). And most people are too comfy with their material lives to pursue the subtle analysis of 'experiential'/'existential' reality to that extent.

I guess people involved in family life/ regular material life ('samsara') would typically find it almost impossible to do subtle analysis of 'experiential'/'existential' reality as the pulls and pushes of family life/normal material life would not be conducive to creating a detached and serene mental space which seems to be necessary for such subtle analysis of one's reality. That may be why, in ancient days, the Upanishads (and the 'aranyakas') were ideally supposed to be read after withdrawing from 'samsara' and moving to the forest. However just moving to the forest alone would not guarantee serenity :-). Serenity may perhaps get achieved only after the arishadvargas (six passions, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arishadvargas>) of Kama (desire/lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (Greed), Moha (Infatuation/delusion), Mada (Pride/Arrogance) and Matsarya (Jealousy) are conquered or, at least, tamed.

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Chapter 6, Part 8

Verse 1 *Uddaalako haarunih svethakethum puthram uvaacha svapnaantham me somya vijaanihithi, yathraithath purushah svapithi naama, sathaa somya tadaa sampanno bhavathi svam apitho bhavathi thasmaadenam svapithithy aachakshathe svam he apitho bhavathi.*

[MM, SBE]: Uddālaka Āruni said to his son Svetaketu: Learn from me the true nature of sleep (svapna). When a man sleeps here, then, my dear son, he becomes united with the True, he is gone to his own (Self). Therefore they say, svapiti, he sleeps, because he is gone (apīta) to his own (sva).

Ravi: My understanding of this is that while we are awake the being-ness (consciousness) seems to us to be limited to our mind-body complexes. But in sleep (or deep sleep rather) we lose our mind-body identifications and are closer to the pure being-ness (consciousness) state.

On the lighter side, now I have a 'spiritual' understanding of why I love and enjoy my sleep so much :-).

Chapter 6, Part 9

Verse 1 *Yathaa somya madhu madhukrto nisthishtanthi naanaathyayaanaam vrkshaanaam rasaaan samavahaarame kataam rasam gamaynthi.*

[MM, SBE]: 'As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form,

Verse 2 *Te yathaa tatra na vivekam labhanthe amushyaaham vrkshasya rasosmi amushyaaham vrkshasya rasosmiti evam eva khalu somya imaah sarvaah prajaah sathi sampadya na viduh sathi sampadyaamaha ithi.*

[MM, SBE]: 'And as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True (either in deep sleep or in death), know not that they are merged in the True. '

Verse 4 *Sa ya esho anima aithadaathmyam idam sarvam thath sathyam sa aathma thath thvam asi shvethaketho ithi bhuya eva maa bhagavaan vijnaapayatvithi thathaa somya ithi hovaacha.*

[MM, SBE]: 'Now that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.' 'Please, Sir, inform me still more,' said the son. 'Be it so, my child,' the father replied.

Ravi: The 'Thath thvam asi' OR 'Tat tvam asi' Mahavakya comes from this Upanishad. The literal translations of these three words seems to be 'You are that'. Like the other Mahavakyas, the full import is stunning, 'You are (or your ultimate reality is) the subtle essence, the cause of all this world!!!' Some mystics claim to have had such an experience of their reality, their truth. They experience that they are in others and that others are in them! What an awesome, mind-blowing

and staggering experience that must be? I feel that there are degrees of self-realization. I know others may laugh but that's how I feel as of now. The lesser degree is attained when a person realizes his "changeless being-ness" or "changeless is-ness". But experiencing oneself in all and all in oneself seems to be a distinctly higher degree of self-realization.

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Ravi: I would like to add a reference here to the Neti, Neti teaching in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (and elsewhere too), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neti_netī.

A small extract from the above wiki page:

Neti neti, meaning, "Not this, not this", is the method of Vedic analysis of negation. It is a keynote of Vedic inquiry. With its aid the Jnani negates identification with all things of this world which is not the Atman, in this way he negates the Anatman. Through this gradual process he negates the mind and transcends all worldly experiences that are negated till nothing remains but the Self. He attains union with the Absolute by denying the body, name, form, intellect, senses and all limiting adjuncts and discovers what remains, the true "I" alone.

— end extract —

Ravi: During my younger days when I read the Neti, Neti statement of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I felt that the main point it conveyed was that Brahman was indescribable. Now the understanding is that one subtly analyses one's experiential/existential reality and keeps negating whatever can be negated experientially (subtle experience). E.g. Experiencing that one is not the body and then that one is not the mind and not the intellect. What then remains experientially is awareness alone and that cannot be negated or denied. Further that awareness never changes (changeless "being-ness" or changeless "is-ness") and that is the experience of Brahman, or, at least, partial experience (lesser degree of experience) of Brahman.

Experientially getting deeper into one's reality and negating the mind and intellect can wreck the normal life that one leads. So perhaps this process can be done typically by recluses and not by people leading regular lives. However this process of Ultimate Existential Real Analysis seems unbelievably simple theoretically :-).

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Ravi – Overall Notes

The shlokas mentioned in this document and the comments related to it are about the subtle, deep and ultimate truth of existence. Experiencing the "changeless being-ness" or "changeless is-ness" would give paramshanti (deep peace or as the Holy Bible says, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding), fearlessness (e.g. no fear of death) and freedom (from worldly wants/responsibilities/bonds). But the experience of Love does not seem to be mentioned. So the impression I have, right or wrong, is that the vedantic (upanishadic) path gives the saakshi (witness) experience but not necessarily the experience of Love.

The Karma Kanda (Samhitas and Brahmanas) part of the Vedas revels in the worship and adulation of the Awesome, Almighty and Wonderful God. It is a phenomenal and staggering achievement of Bharat/India that the Vedas have been preserved across millennia and yugas. Perhaps that achievement too is due to the Grace of God. He sees to it that whenever reverence and worship of and faith in the Vedas dips either some Mahapurushas are sent amongst humanity or He Himself comes as the Avatar to restore reverence and worship of and faith in the Veda to its glorious and rightful place. Even today certain mantras from the Karma Kanda of the Vedas like the Gayathri, Purusha suktam, Rudram and Mahamrutyunjaya mantras are revered and devoutly chanted by millions of Bharatiyas/Indians. But once again it perhaps is more awe, reverence, wonder and worship but not so much of Love.

In contrast, the Great Accounts/Histories of the Avatars (e.g. Bhagvat Purana and Ramayana) clearly show the Great Love that Almighty God displays when He comes in human form. Almighty God in human form like Rama or Krishna allows Himself to be bound by the love of His Bhaktas. The Avatars declare and affirm that God is Love and that man can sanctify his human birth by loving God with all his heart and lead a joyous life. The Avatars come for all humanity or, at least, for all the devotees of God, not just for the Vedantic/Upanishadic truth seekers or for the Vedic Karma Kanda worshippers, and show how one can lead regular lives (family lives/material lives) and make that life a great and happy gift of God by having staunch faith that All is God and Loving All to the extent possible considering one's duties and responsibilities.

Some say that the Upanishadic/Vedantic truth seeker must first go through the Karma Kanda of the Vedas phase and acquire the attitude of intense devotional worship and reverence of Almighty God before he embarks on the Upanishadic/Vedantic phase of spiritual sadhana.

Perhaps the Upanishadic/Vedantic truth seeker can bring in the experience of Love in his/her sadhana by having staunch faith in Almighty God's (avatars') declarations that God/Parabrahman is Love, and do his/her seeking of his/her existential reality with a heart full of Love for Almighty God who is his/her Creator. The Mahavakyas from the Upanishads like 'Tat tvam asi' may perhaps lead the seeker to the goal of realizing that he/she is a part of that same Loving God and is in essence the same Loving God.

Another fascinating aspect of the Vedantic search is the role of faith. Some mystics say that just intense faith in a Mahavakya like 'Tat tvam asi' has the power to confer the experience of 'Tat tvam asi'!! Such kind of intense faith perhaps has the power to tear away and discard all the false notions that the Great Maya of the Lord traps us in (like I am the body or I am the mind or I am so-and-so personality) and thereby grant the direct experience of the "unchanging is-ness" or "unchanging being-ness".

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